

# California Electric and Magnetic Fields Program N E W S L E T T E R

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES UPDATE

May 2000

## JOINT NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

On Thursday, May 11, 2000, Raymond Neutra and Jessica Hecht of the California EMF program staff presented at a panel session on electric and magnetic fields (EMF) at the first annual joint Northern and Southern California Public Health Associations' conference.

Landis Martilla of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Michael Herz of Pacific Gas and Electric, and Joan Tukey of the California Alliance for Utility Safety and Education (CAUSE) also participated in this panel, which was titled "Electromagnetic Fields: Should we worry or not?"

Each panel member provided a different perspective on the issue of power frequency EMF. Raymond Neutra focused his presentation on the California EMF Program and its research efforts, and Jessica Hecht discussed the Education and Technical Assistance Unit's strategies for communicating information on EMF to interested members of the public. Michael Herz gave an overview of basic information about the nature of EMF and its relationship to the power grid, and Landis Martilla discussed the history of IBEW's interest in EMF. Joan Tukey provided a concerned citizen's perspective and described the origin of CAUSE. Christine Arnesen of the Department of Health Services Environmental Health Investigations Branch organized and moderated this session.

## CHANGE IN STAFF BIOELECTROMAGNETICS SOCIETY MEETING PARTICIPATION

Due to the need to work on the Risk Evaluation, Raymond Neutra and Gerri Lee have withdrawn their abstracts from the Bioelectromagnetics Society annual meeting. Vincent del Pizzo and Patrick Levallois still plan to attend the conference from the California EMF Program.

## SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY PANEL MEETING SCHEDULE

At the last Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) meeting, the SAP members asked Raymond Neutra to investigate the possibility of holding additional SAP meetings beyond the final meeting already planned. Specifically they wanted to find out about the possibility of holding an additional SAP meeting later this year to discuss the first draft of the

### **Project Milestones April 16, 2000, through May 15, 2000**

- Received draft final report of the Occupational Exposure Survey, titled "Activity-based Assessment of Magnetic Field Exposures," from Dr. Michael Yost.
- Received all peer reviewers' comments on the Prospective Miscarriage Study interim report.
- Received review of the cost estimates in the Power Grid and Land Use Policy Analysis from Commonwealth Associates, Inc.

**Risk Evaluation.** As expected, staff have confirmed that the Department of Health Services' legal counsel caution against holding a closed meeting because it could violate the Bagley-Keene Act, which requires open meetings. Department policy precludes holding an open, public meeting on a scientific draft that has not been approved by the Department's administration.

Instead of holding a meeting on this draft, the staff will send copies to each SAP member for review in the late summer or early fall. Staff will then revise the draft based on the SAP members' comments and send the draft, with the SAP comments, to the Department leadership for approval to release it for public comments.

After the public comment period in the fall, the SAP will meet to discuss their own and the public's comments on the public draft. This meeting will be open to public observation, but no oral comments will be accepted at the meeting. Based on our current schedule, we expect this meeting to take place during March 2001.

## RESEARCH UNIT UPDATES

**School Policy Analysis:** The documentation for the computer model has been received and distributed to our stakeholders. It is also accessible to the public through our Web site. Public comments on the draft materials are due on Monday, May 22, 2000.

**Power Grid/Land Use Policy Analysis:** Detlof von Winterfeldt continues to revise the draft final report in the light of the SAC's comments. It will be submitted to the peer reviewers once this review is complete. Commonwealth Associates, Inc., one of the engineering consultants, has submitted a generally favorable report of the EnerTech Cost Estimate software and the cost estimates used in this model. The other engineering consultant, NK Cables, has been purchased by another company; the new management is unwilling to provide this review and has withdrawn from their contract.

**Epidemiology Workshop:** Several papers from this workshop have been accepted by the journal *Bioelectromagnetics*, and others are now being revised by the authors in response to the peer reviewers' comments. Two or three papers are still under peer review.

**Prospective Miscarriage Study:** We have received comments from all of this project's peer reviewers, including Abdelmonem Afifi, Michael Criqui, Lowell Sever, and Nancy Wetheimer. Most of the comments were suggestions to help clarify the findings; no major flaws were identified. The peer reviewers have given their approval for De-Kun Li to present his findings for comment at the Society for Epidemiological Research meeting in June. The abstract will be sent to the program's stakeholders in the next regular program mailing.

**Occupational Exposure Study:** The final report for this study has been submitted and is being sent to the peer reviewers.

**Policy Integration:** Further work on this project will begin when the Risk Evaluation and the policy analyses are substantially completed.

**Risk Evaluation:** The research staff are continuing to write the first draft of this project. Webb Sprague, the program's research associate, is helping the research staff prepare their pro- and con- arguments for the evaluation. He is also graphing the point estimates and confidence intervals of relative risks found in the studies of possible health effects of EMF that are being considered in this evaluation. These graphs show the information from the relevant studies of each endpoint together on a single graph in order to compare the results from the different studies.

**EMF Program Library:** Webb Sprague, with input from the rest of the staff, continues to monitor the literature to keep the Program's EMF library up to date.

## EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UNIT UPDATES

### *Video on Correcting Improper Wiring in Schools*

After much effort and coordination by all those involved, the video on fixing wiring problems in schools has been distributed to every school district in the state.

According to Pat Rose at the state Department of Education School Facilities Planning Division, copies of the video and accompanying cover materials were mailed out at the end of April.

The California EMF Program has a VHS copy of the video for our files, and we hope to receive a "master" suitable for copying. The Program will distribute information to our stakeholders on how to get copies of the video when it becomes available.

Program staff would like to acknowledge the work done by everyone who participated in the production and distribution of this video. Those involved in this effort include DuWayne Brooks, Pat Rose, and others at the state Department of Education; Jon Sirugo and others at Southern California Edison; EMF consultant Karl Riley; and the California EMF Program staff.

### *California Public Health Association Conference*

As described above, Jessica Hecht presented at the California Public Health Association conference panel on EMF. This presentation focused on the Program's strategies for educating the public about EMF and included a description of existing and planned educational materials.

### *Other Education and Technical Assistance Unit Activities*

**Web site:** The Education Unit continues to monitor the content of the Web site to keep it up to date. The site has been getting 250-300 visitors each week from across the country and around the world.

**Response to Public Questions:** As usual, the Education Unit responded to telephone calls, e-mails, and letters from people with questions about EMF.

Questions were received from individuals, families, and local government agencies with questions about EMF in residences and occupational settings.

**Support of the Research Unit:** The Education Unit continues to support the Research Unit by assisting in planning for the completion of the research projects and the distribution of draft products for public comment. Specifically, this unit is working on improving the readability of the Risk Evaluation draft and planning for the completion of the first draft.

**Newsletter:** As always, the Education Unit coordinates the production of the program's monthly newsletter.

### *New Health Education Assistant*

The Education Unit is pleased to report that Kimberly Merin will begin work in June as the Program's new Health Education Assistant. Her main responsibilities will be to draft educational materials and non-technical summaries of the research products. She will be working with the Program 15 hours per week, and will report to the Health Educator. Kim describes herself in the following way:

"After 18 years in a suburb outside of LA, I was excited to move up to the Bay Area and attend U.C. Berkeley. Now, four years later, I am sadly leaving Cal, having earned a B.A. in film with a minor in Conservation and Resource Studies. In my junior year I studied abroad in Bologna, Italy. I came back from that experience speaking Italian, wanting to travel, and with a newfound appreciation (snobbery) for Italian food. I'm now pursuing a career in environmental health, while hoping to have some free time for hiking, watching good films, photography, and any other random hobbies I may pick up along the way."

## JUNE AND JULY 2000 NEWSLETTERS COMBINED

The June and July 2000 newsletters will be combined and sent out in late July. Vincent del Pizzo will be attending the Bioelectromagnetics Society Conference in Munich during the month of June. In addition, combining the newsletters will allow the staff to focus on producing the first draft of the Risk Evaluation.

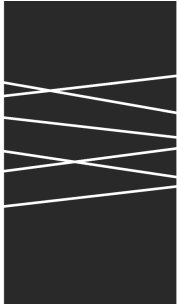
and the California Department of Health Services

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### California Electric and Magnetic Fields Program

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